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THE BAPTIST ANSWERED.

THE

DOCTRINE OF INFANT BAPTISM,

AS

TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURES

AND

Practised in the Church.

BY REV. WM. BULLOCK,
RECTOR OF DIGBY.

"Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." *Mark* x. 13, 14.

"The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most *agreeable* with the institution of Christ." *Article* XXVII.

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PREFACE.

A more perfect argument upon the subject of the following discourse is to be found in the admirable works of the Rev. William Gray, of St. John, and the Rev. James Robertson, of Bridgetown; and to them I refer the reader, who would "prove all things and hold fast that which is good;" to scholars and to men of leisure they furnish an unanswerable defence of Infant Baptism. But, logical investigation and massive argument are offered in vain to the uneducated and laboring poor; while the doctrines of the fathers and the practices of antiquity are alike undervalued and disallowed by those who are in error upon the subject. Either of these books, abridged and simplified by their able authors, would supersede the necessity of the present undertaking; the object of which is to set before the unlearned inquirer the true doctrine of the initiatory sacrament, and to vindicate the practice of the Church by the alone evidence of the sacred Scriptures. I have strictly confined myself to the one great doctrine of Infant Baptism, and have purposely avoided the dispute upon Immersion, the Shibboleth of the Baptists; and upon the necessary qualification of the baptizer. But, I will here state that I am fully persuaded that the spirit of the commandment is fulfilled either by affusion or sprinkling—each and all being practised in the Church; nor can

I shrink from the avowal of my belief, that they, who so scrupulously adhere to the one mode of administering the sacrament, have no authority to administer it at all; and that having no scriptural ordination to the ministry, their baptisms must be irregular, if not altogether invalid.

The spirit of inquiry awakened by the preaching of this sermon has induced me to publish it, that its effect may not terminate in a temporary excitement; but that my parishioners may ponder its arguments with unimpassioned minds, and imitate those noble Bereans, who searched the Scriptures, whether the things spoken of were christian verity;—and it is sent forth with the earnest prayer, that it may serve to build up and to fortify the members of the Church in her precious faith, and assist those who have strayed from her pure and peaceful household, to discern the free grace of God, as it is manifested in the admission of our children into the covenant and the kingdom of heaven.

W. Bullock.

Rectory, Digby, March, 1842.

SERMON.

AND WHEN THE EIGHT DAYS WERE ACCOMPLISHED FOR THE CIRCUMCISING OF THE CHILD, THEY CALLED HIS NAME JESUS.

Luke ii. 21.

EVERY circumstance in the life of our Saviour deserves devout attention, and is full of instruction; and this is especially true with respect to those significant acts, by which he fulfilled the Law, and sanctioned the usages of the Jewish Church. That Church was in all important things the same as the Christian; and although its outward rites were different, in doctrine and order there is a perfect agreement; and we are taught to look upon the ancient congregation of the Lord, as the parent stock, upon which has been grafted Christ's Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. By all the feasts and ceremonies of the Law, were shadowed forth the richer promises and purer services of the Gospel; and it is worthy of remark, that the Church which was established by the Law of Moses, like that which is now "*built upon the Apostles and Prophets*," had its sacrament of admission, and its sacrament of commemoration—the Circumcision and the Passover; to both of which especial blessings were promised, and which continued to be signs and seals of God's covenant with man, until our blessed Saviour, having fulfilled the Law, ordained in their stead the more spiritual sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; by the means of which the Christian is born to God and strengthened and refreshed through every period of his life;—the first, like Circumcision, admitting him into the covenant; and the second, like the Passover, continually reminding him of his privileges and his responsibility. But, we are called by the text to confine our present notice to the sacred rite of Circumcision, and to its corresponding ordinance in the Christian Church.

To rightly understand the mystery of the Circumcision to which our infant Saviour submitted, it is necessary to state to you its origin and its epoch. The first mention of it is in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, when God revealed it to Abraham, and recorded it for us: "*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an* EVERLASTING COVENANT; *to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*"* As a token and seal of the covenant, God gave him this sacred rite, and commanded that on the eighth day, every male child should be circumcised; and the neglect of this outward sign was declared to be a violation of the covenant and a forfeiture of its blessings. "*And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from the people; he hath broken my covenant.*"† So we learn that the origin of Circumcision was the sovereign will of GOD, and its effect was to bring the chosen people into covenant with Him. As such it was observed by all who valued their election, and exercised their faith in the promises of God—as such it was sanctioned and received, when "*the eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, and they called His name* JESUS"—as such it must still be considered by us; for although the sign is changed, the signification remains—although we no longer circumcise our children, our children enter into covenant with God. St. Paul, discoursing upon the subject, calls the sign of circumcision "*the seal of the righteousness which is by faith;*"‡ and he points out, with wonderful precision, its nature as a sacrament; it was an entrance into covenant with God, "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to them;" it was not merely a mark to distinguish them from the heathen—it was the mystical cutting off of sin—the mystical adoption into the family of God. "*The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*"§ So we see, it was not a mere ceremony, once to be performed and then to be forever forgotten—it was to remove sin—it was to sanctify the heart—to fill it with divine love and prepare it for eternal life.

But, the sacrament of Circumcision has ceased; it is an ordinance which Christ has cancelled, and it now availeth nothing.‖ And have all its blessings failed? Are all its precious promises

* Gen. xvii. 7. † Verse 14. ‡ Rom. iv. 11.
§ Deut. xxx. 6. ‖ Gal. v. 6.

reversed? No, my brethren, no; they are secured to us by the "*Circumcision of Christ.*" Is it even so? then where is the sign of the covenant? Where is the "*seal of the righteousness which is by faith?*" We have them in the "*washing of regeneration.*"* We have them in the sacrament of our Baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus! And so Baptism is now to us what Circumcision was to the ancient children of the covenant—it is the means whereby we are admitted into the Church of God: and HE, who fulfilled the one, ordained the other in its stead; HE who on the eighth day was circumcised because He was "*born under the Law,*"† has taught us by His example, that it is never too soon to enter into covenant with our Father—never too soon to receive the sign of our adoption to be HIS sons and daughters. Nor was the command to circumcise more strict and imperative, than that by which it was superseded, when the great Lord and Mediator of the renewed covenant sent forth his Apostles to make disciples of all nations, and to "*baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"‡ It was *then* that all the privileges and blessings annexed to Circumcision were transferred to the sacrament of Baptism thus ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.§ And now to neglect this sacred ordinance is to despise the authority of our Lord and Saviour, and to place ourselves in the condition of those excommunicated men who in former days "*broke the covenant, and were cut off from the people of the Lord.*"‖

Great is the truth and sweet the consolation to be derived from this event of our Saviour's life; and while it teaches the necessity of fulfilling all the righteous ordinances of the Church, assures us that all the mercies of the Gospel are free, and that all its promises are to us and to our children. "*And when the eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, they called his name* JESUS." The Law is fulfilled—Christ was the end of it—still His covenant of grace standeth sure, and the blessings promised to the Church are neither lessened nor limited, now that the admission into it is by the more spiritual sacrament of holy Baptism. Yes, my brethren, the "*promise is to us and to our children*;"¶ and like the children of Abraham, after the example of the HOLY CHILD JESUS, we may enter the covenant as soon as we are born; and this being the case, is it

* Titus iii. 5. † Gal. iv. 4. ‡ Matth. xxviii. 19.
§ Church Catechism. ‖ Gen. xvii. 14. ¶ Acts ii. 39.

not well for us to consider, if, in denying to children the sign and seal of that covenant, we do not put a stumbling block in their way, and keep them back from the privileges which are at once their birthright and their blessing. The children of Jews were admitted to this covenant, and their Circumcision was a profitable service ;* it sealed them as members of God's chosen family—it made them the inheritors of the promises made to Abraham—to Abraham and his seed forever.† And can it be that the Gospel, "*the ministration of glory*," is so much less privileged than the Law, "*the ministration of condemnation*," that the children of Christians—of Christians, the true and spiritual seed of Abraham,‡ are to derive no advantage from this gracious decree, and that thousands are to live and die without admission into the everlasting covenant? God forbid! "*Their angels do behold the face of their Father in heaven*," and they cannot be excluded from the grace and favor of adoption upon earth.

It is possible that all of you have heard expressions of contempt on Infant Baptism—it is possible that some of you may have indulged in them; but, did our Lord sanction such expressions when He submitted to Infant Circumcision? and did He not most solemnly reprove them when He bade his disciples to "*suffer little children to come unto Him and forbid them not*"? § We learn from the history of the Circumcision, that infants might enter into covenant with God, and we see in the conduct of our kind Redeemer, that they might participate in spiritual mercies, for "*He laid his hands upon them and blessed them.*" It is a vain thing to argue that there is no express command to baptize infants; there needed none; the law of Circumcision was a sufficient rule, and in this law the time was distinctly prescribed; and it is the same covenant, only unveiled, made new and perfected with better hopes and better promises, of which Baptism is the sign and seal; and which was ordained by Christ when he charged his Apostles to "*disciple all nations*,"—there is no direction to *change* the time—there is no intimation that the time *was changed*, and in all the Scripture there is no word of prohibition upon the children of Christians. On the contrary, not only the Circumcision of the infant Jesus, but the word of his Apostles, the conduct of the first Christians, and the judgment of the whole Catholic Church, all combine to witness the truth which our reason approves and which our faith confirms, viz.

* Rom. iii. 1, 2. † Luke i. 55. ‡ Acts iii. 25. Gal. iii. 29.
§ Mark x. 14.

that *God is unchangeable;* and that the token of the covenant accorded to the infant Jews, is not denied to the children of Christians; and it was with this assurance that St. Peter, when persuading the multitude to Baptism, appeals to this privilege—"*Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with our fathers.*"* Of what covenant did he then speak? Was it not the same which God made to Abraham, of which all the children of Abraham received the seal on the eighth day, and of which holy Baptism is now the sign? If there could be any doubt upon this subject, it is removed by the arguments of St. Paul, where he speaks of the Church under the figure of an olive tree, of which Christianity is the *graft*, and tells his converts that they shared all the privileges of the covenant made with Abraham—privileges which he compares to "*the root and fatness of the olive tree.*"† And to make the affinity still more close and clear, we have only to read the third chapter to the Galatians, where he distinctly asserts that the Gospel was preached unto Abraham,‡ and that it is one and the same covenant. "*Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith are the children of Abraham. ..... For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus;* AND IF YE BE CHRIST'S, THEN ARE YE ABRAHAM'S SEED AND HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE."§

No words can be plainer, and they teach us that the Gospel was not to contract but to expand the free mercies of God—not to limit but to extend the blessings of the covenant. They had *never* been confined to infancy or to age—but now every obstruction was to be removed. The covenant had been restricted to Jews, but now the Gentiles were to be admitted. The token of the covenant had been given only to males, but now females were to receive it also; all were to be one in Christ Jesus; and

* Acts iii. 25. † Rom. xi. 17. ‡ 8th verse.

§ Gal. iii. 26, *et seq.* It is true that the Gospel is called, by St. Paul, "*a new covenant*," but we must not make him so contradict all those other passages in which he speaks of it being one and the same with the Abrahamic covenant. It was new, in the same sense in which the commandment to "*love one another*" was a "*new commandment.*" It was new, as being *that* in substance which the ancient covenant was in shadow, with a larger effusion of grace and richer promises of mercy. It was new, as removing all restrictions—as supplying every thing that was wanting—as revealing every thing that had been veiled and hidden—as embracing all who had been excluded, and making "*all one in Christ Jesus*"—old and young, male and female, Jew and Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, without hindrance or distinction, "*all one in Christ Jesus.*"

if the Jewish infant were to be admitted into the Church on the eighth day, it would be cruel, it would be profane, to exclude the heir of "*a more excellent ministry*" from the very earliest consignation of its blessings.

Nothing, therefore, but necessity is deemed by the Church a sufficient excuse for delay, and while by her article she affirms her judgment that "the baptism of young children is to be retained," as most agreeable to the institution of Christ, she directs, by her Rubric, "that it be not deferred longer than the first or second Sunday after its birth."

The Circumcision of the infant Jesus ought to be sufficient to settle the question of Infant Baptism, which with striking fidelity is called by the Apostle, "*the Circumcision of Christ*," or, as it is sometimes called, Christian Circumcision, or the Circumcision of Christians.* In all the baptisms of the Apostles, no exception of children is ever made. The baptism of the woman of Thyatira and "*her house*,"† of the Philippian jailer "*and all his*,"‡ and of "*the household of Stephenas*,"§ are all recorded in a manner to show that neither doubts nor scruples were entertained upon the subject. The argument of St. Paul, that a believing parent sanctifies the children, is another convincing proof that such children could enter into covenant. For "*the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean*, BUT NOW ARE THEY HOLY,‖—that is, dedicated, or capable of being dedicated to God, for in no other way could they be considered holy; while the invariable practice of the Catholic Church for many hundred years confirms this view of the case, as it is presented to us in the word of God;¶ and although at various times, as at the present, there have been contentious men to hinder and find fault with the baptism of children,** there are none bold enough to dispute *the fact* that such was the custom in all the Churches in every age; and all true believers in the primitive Church allowed its validity, and valued it as their promise and their privilege. Again, I repeat, *the fact was never denied;* and it proves the undisputed custom of the apostolic age, that at the

* Col. ii. 11. † Acts xvi. 15. ‡ Acts xvi. 33.
§ 1 Cor. i. 16. ‖ 1 Cor. vii. 14.

¶ Peter Bruis, a Frenchman who lived in the eleventh century, was the first Baptist who had a regular congregation. The Baptists of Germany, a turbulent and enthusiastic sect, took their rise in the beginning of the fifteenth century; and there was no congregation of Baptists in England before the year 1640.

** St. Denis, the Areopagite, calls them "unholy persons and enemies to the Christian Religion."

council of Carthage* there was a question, not if infants should be baptized, but if it should be done before the eighth day; and that is a fine argument for the custom, which is supplied us by Irenæus, who lived only a few years after the inspired Apostles. "Christ," he says, "did sanctify every age by his own susception of it and similitude to it. For He came to save all men by himself; all, I say, who by Him are born again unto God, infants and children and boys, and young men and old men. He was made an infant to infants, sanctifying infants," &c.† And so the tradition of the Church, and the practice of the Apostles, and the example of Christ, all concur as consentient witnesses to the virtue and necessity of Infant Baptism.

Yet objections are urged against the practice, and I will endeavor with fairness and meekness to answer them.

"A negative argument for matters of fact," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "cannot conclude a law;" and yet all the arguments that infants should not be baptized are of this character; and the passages in Scripture brought forward to support them, although sometimes plausible, will, none of them, when fairly examined, bear such an interpretation.

The first is, the charge of our Saviour to his Apostles, "*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"‡ From this it is argued that teaching ought to go before Baptism, and as infants cannot be taught, therefore they ought not to be baptized: and if these were the exact words of Christ, the conclusion would not be unwarrantable. All the words of the covenant were to be taught to the Jews, yet they did not wait until this could be done, to circumcise their children and thereby admit them to the covenant; but the Greek word in this text, which we have rendered "*teach*," literally means *disciple*, or *make disciples;* and thus rightly understood, all the point of the argument is lost, and teaching follows the ordinance, "*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; ond lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*" The command is emphatic—"*all nations*"—of which children are an integral part, and there is no word to exclude them.

The next passage is the same commission of our Lord, as it is

* This council was held A. D. 250; St. Cyprian president. It was attended by sixty-six African Bishops, and they all declared unanimously, that none were to be hindered from Baptism and the grace of God, and this rule was more especially to be observed with reference to infants.

† Iren. Lib. ii. c. 39. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 19.

recorded by St. Mark. "*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he who believeth not shall be damned.*"* Here the same line of argument is pursued, viz. "*He who believeth and is baptized shall be saved*"—infants cannot believe, and therefore infants are not to be baptized. But this involves a difficulty even greater than the former; and would lead to a conclusion revolting to reason and at variance with the attributes and word of God; that He requires that which we are unable to perform, and will punish the neglect of obligations which it is impossible to fulfil;—for if the deduction be right on one point of the text, it must be on the other, and then it would be, infants cannot be saved because they cannot believe; nay, what is even worse—infants cannot believe, and therefore, infants will be damned. May God deliver you from such an error—opposed, as it is, to the greatness of His mercy and the freeness of His grace.

The other passage which makes repentance necessary admits of the same general reply. "*Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*"† Here repentance was required of all who had committed sin, and could understand and value the grace of God; but this was not to exclude from the Gospel covenant all those who had no present capacity for these things; and lest they should fall into this mistake, the words of the following verse seem to have been added—"*for the promise is to you* AND TO YOUR *children.*" All the demands of the Gospel suppose the capacity to fulfil them, and God expects of us "*only according to what we have, and not according to what we have not.*"‡ We may illustrate this, by the manner we act upon other impracticable precepts. Take, for instance, the passage of the Apostle—"*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*" Here industry is required of all, to obtain their daily bread; and yet what parent ever thinks of denying necessary food to an infant, who has no capacity to work for it?

We must not deny—we *do not* deny—that knowledge and faith and repentance are all necessary, *when they can be practised:* they were necessary to every adult convert to the Jewish religion, before he could be circumcised; they would be neces-

* Mark xvi. 15, 16. † Acts ii. 38. ‡ 2 Cor viii. 10.

sary to any one of you, if, (neglecting it until this time,) you were now to present yourselves for Baptism. This is the doctrine of the Church, as taught in her Catechism; it is the doctrine of the Gospel; but, it applies not to children who have no ability to learn—no capacity to believe—no occasion to repent. It was no obstacle to the circumcision of infants that they were untaught—that they did not believe—that they could not repent; —but, if when they were capable of these things, they neglected them—if while they prided themselves as being the children of Abraham, they failed to do the works of Abraham, and became breakers of the Law, then "*their circumcision became uncircumcision*,"* and they forfeited all the blessings of the covenant. So, in like manner, if, baptized in infancy, you live to commit sin, and forget God and remain unchanged and unsanctified in heart and life; why, then your Baptism will be as no Baptism; that is, it will avail you nothing to salvation, and others less privileged will be preferred before you, "*when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.*"†

I am aware that the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch is frequently urged against Infant Baptism; but, when rightly considered, it will prove no more than the capital texts I have already noticed; it will prove no more than I am ready to allow, viz. that an idolater ought not to be baptized—that a denier of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be received into covenant with God. St. Philip knew that this treasurer of Queen Candace had been brought up an Egyptian and a heathen; he had, however, witnessed some signs of his conversion, in his attention to the Scriptures and the request to be baptized, and he was taught by the reply of the Evangelist that the outward washing of water would confer no benefit unless he had embraced the Gospel in sincerity. "*If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.*"‡ But, in what manner does this prohibit the baptism of infants? We know that when a heathen was converted to the Jewish religion, he was not only circumcised himself, but all his children received the sign of the covenant on his account.§ Let us look to this argument. If a heathen that had turned from idols to the living God, had prayed to be circumcised according to the Law, and the Priest had said, if thou believest in the God of Israel thou mayest; would such an

* Rom. ii. 25. † Luke xiii. 28. ‡ Acts viii. 37.
§ Exod. xii. 48.

answer serve to hinder the circumcision of his children? If one of your neighbors, who all his life long had openly professed himself an unbeliever, were to present himself to me for baptism, and I were to make the same reply, you might indeed say I demanded a profession of his faith; but you could not reasonably say that I forbade the baptism of his children—the children who would be sanctified and made meet for that ordinance by the conversion and faith and baptism of their parent.*

I am willing to meet every objection, and to give to each all the weight it deserves—no more. It is said, that in the Scriptures there is no special command to baptize infants. I have already admitted this; and I have stated that no special command was necessary;—it was not necessary, for there was to be no change; into the covenant children had always been received, —with the sign of the covenant children had always been sealed —received and sealed on the eighth day. If the absence of a command is to be an argument at all, it must be in favor of the practice; for if after two thousand years the practice were to be changed, surely our blessed Saviour would have given us a special rule upon the subject. But no such rule is to be found. On the contrary, all the intimations of the Scriptures go to sanction and perpetuate the free grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, in suffering little children to come unto Him to be born again and blessed; for, if Circumcision had still been retained as the sign of the covenant, and the command had run thus—Go and teach all nations, *circumcising* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; surely, none would have been so bold as to argue from this, that the Circumcision of children was to be discontinued; or make the omission of the time, a reason for denying to them an entrance into the covenant.

If an express command is indeed necessary for every religious duty, then how is it that they who deny Infant Baptism on that account, keep the first day of the week holy, and profane the seventh, the ancient sabbath? for in all the New Testament there is not one word of command upon the subject; or where shall they find a scriptural rule or a scriptural example for the admission of females to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? For St. Paul says, "*Let a* MAN *examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*;"† and we know that

* 1. Cor. vii. 14.

† 1. Cor. xi. 28.

our blessed Lord administered the sacrament only to his twelve disciples.

But, they say, they have both rule and example for their practice, and point to the Baptism of our blessed Lord, who did not receive the rite until he was thirty years old. There never was a greater mistake than that of supposing the baptism of John to be Christian baptism; or that our Lord in receiving that baptism affords us a just reason for delaying our own, or that of our children. It is the Circumcision, not the Baptism of Christ which is to be our pattern. By Circumcision He entered the covenant, as we, by Baptism, enter it now. The baptism of John was only a preparatory service, the baptism of repentance—a service suited only to the time and circumstance, and which ceased with him—a baptism which was received only by a limited number, and which did not make the true sacrament of Baptism unnecessary; for many received it at the hands of John, who had never even "*heard of the Holy Ghost*," and were baptized again into the name of the Lord Jesus.*

Oh! then, I pray you, my dear brethren, to weigh well these arguments which speak for the free mercy of God, and the unspeakable benefit of your children—children who are ordained by God to eternal life—children given to you that you may join them unto the Lord in the everlasting covenant. Oh! consider, and beware how you limit the goodness and the grace of God; consider and beware how you act the part of those rebuked disciples, who would have hindered the little children when brought to Christ, and whom Christ blessed and pronounced to be fit objects of the kingdom of God.† Oh! consider, consider and beware of the measure you mete to your children, lest at a greater day the same be measured to you again; and the entrance you refuse them to the kingdom of God upon earth, be denied you to the kingdom of God in heaven. And if all my arguments fail, yet let the word of Jesus awaken you to the responsibility. "*It were better that a millstone were hanged about your neck, and ye cast into the sea, than that ye should offend one of these little ones.*"‡ And I cannot but believe that we do offend them when we keep them from a sacramental union with their willing Saviour, and leave them to the uncovenanted mercies of their God.

What is to be the consequence to those who live and die in this alienated state, we are not competent to decide; we can

* Acts xix. 1—4. † Luke xviii. 16. ‡ Luke xvii. 2.

only form our judgment by the promises made to those who are in the bonds of the covenant—by the promise of pardon—by the promise of grace—by the promise of salvation to those who are born again to God, and fulfil the obligations of their new birth. And the Church has left us to the same rule; for while she declares with authority, that "children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved," she has charged her ministers not to perform the office of Christian burial for any who die unbaptized, lest they should utter expressions with respect to them which God has not sanctioned, or lead men to suppose that it is a matter of indifference whether they are baptized or not.

Once more, then, dear brethren, I entreat you to consider this accumulated evidence for Infant Baptism; and weigh well the judgment of the Church and the pattern of our Lord—who to teach us that children are capable of spiritual mercies, "*took them in His arms and put His hands upon them and blessed them*"—who, to show that they are objects of peculiar favor, informs us that "*in heaven their angels do always behold the face of the Father*"*—who, to prove to us that they are acceptable members of the Church upon earth, declares that "*of such is the kingdom of God*"†—and who, to exemplify all this in his own sacred person, entered as a child of Abraham into the covenant, and received the sign and the seal of it on the eighth day from his birth, "*and they called his name Jesus.*" It was the name assigned Him by the annunciating angel, and was expressive of the office He came to fulfil, the Saviour of the world! He submitted to Circumcision as the child of man, He received His name as the Son of God. And this is the honor put upon holy Baptism; we are taken to it as the offspring of a corrupt nature and a sinful race—"the children of wrath," and we there receive a Christian name, to remind us forever that therein we are made "members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven."‡

Yet let not my arguments be wrested or misunderstood; and while pressing upon you the necessity of Infant Baptism, and the danger of neglecting it, let it not be said that I encourage the vain confidence, that the mere act of Baptism will save you, without its purifying and practical effects. "*Circumcision verily profiteth,*" saith the Apostle, "*if thou keep the Law.*" And we may say the same of Baptism, if you obey the Gospel; and

* Matt. xviii. 10. † Mark x. 14. ‡ Church Catechism.

we judge of its necessity not only by the urgency of the command, but by the blessings annexed to it. It is the mark of the Christian disciple—the mark by which he is distinguished from the Jew and the heathen;—and more than this, "it is a sure witness and effectual sign of grace;" the means whereby we pass from the death of sin, in which we are born, to that life of righteousness to which we are begotten by Christ.* It is the signing and sealing of all the promises in Christ Jesus.† It is the bond of union between Christ and his Church—between the circumcised Jesus and the regenerated soul. "*For,*" we repeat, "*ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.*‡ The necessity of Baptism is to be judged, not only by the blessings which are promised, but also by the penalties which are threatened. Under the Old Testament, to be uncircumcised, was to be cut off from the congregation of Israel; under the New, to be unbaptized, is to be shut out of the Church—out of that Church, of which it is said by Christ Himself, "*Except a man*§ *be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*"‖ But, we must be especially careful, not to confound the sign with the thing signified; not to depend upon the mere outward washing of regeneration, without its renewing and sanctifying grace. It is true, that by baptism we are admitted into the Church—the kingdom of God upon earth; but, it is no where said, that all who are baptized shall be undoubtedly saved, and admitted to the Church of the first-born in heaven. By baptism, we enter into the covenant; but we must observe its laws—we must fulfil its obligations, if we would fully participate in its privileges and inherit all its blessings. We are *called* by our baptism—we are *elected* by our baptism, but we must "*give diligence to make our calling and election sure.*"¶ "*For many are called, but few are chosen.*"** This was the argument which St. Paul addressed to the Jews—"*Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the Law; but, if thou be a breaker of the Law, thy Circumcision is made uncircumcision.*"†† And we are quite safe in applying the same rule to holy Baptism.

Our dependence must be upon Christ, with whom the Christian in baptism is buried, and our sanctification must be referred to the Spirit of Christ, through the operation of which

* 1 Peter i. 3. † 2 Cor. i. 22. ‡ Gal. iii. 26, 27.
§ In the original it is, except *one* be born, &c. ‖ John iii. 5.
¶ 2 Peter i. 10. ** Matth. xx. 16. †† Rom. ii. 25.

we are quickened in that sacrament. "*Born again of water and of the Spirit*," let us seek at all times the guidance of that Spirit, and exercise at all times a practical faith in that quickening power, and adorn that faith with purity of life, and then with confidence we may say, "Now *Baptism saveth us*."* But if we continue in carelessness and sin—if neither the light nor the fruits of the spirit are visible in our lives, then, instead of obtaining such assurance, we shall gather nothing from it but reproof and condemnation—the reproof and condemnation of disloyal subjects and ungrateful children, upon whom a gracious God and Father has freely bestowed His grace and favor, and bestowed them in vain.

To sum up and conclude: Baptism, like Circumcision, is an appointment of God, and it must be complied with; it is a *merciful* appointment, and it ought to make us thankful; it is ordained to be a means of grace, as such we must value it; it lays upon us the greatest obligations, and we must labor diligently to fulfil them; it places us in a state of salvation, and fervent must be our prayers, and earnest our endeavors, that we may continue in that state unto our lives' end: and even then, however severe may have been our repentance, however great our faith, however strict our obedience, we shall attribute all our salvation to the free, the unmerited mercy of God, and not trusting to our works or deservings, we shall say, "Now BAPTISM SAVETH US." The blessedness of Baptism is not in the act once performed, but in its constant power and glorious result; and like its correspondent sacrament of Circumcision, it verily profiteth, if "we truly repent and unfeignedly believe the Gospel."†

* 1 Peter iii. 21. † Church Service.